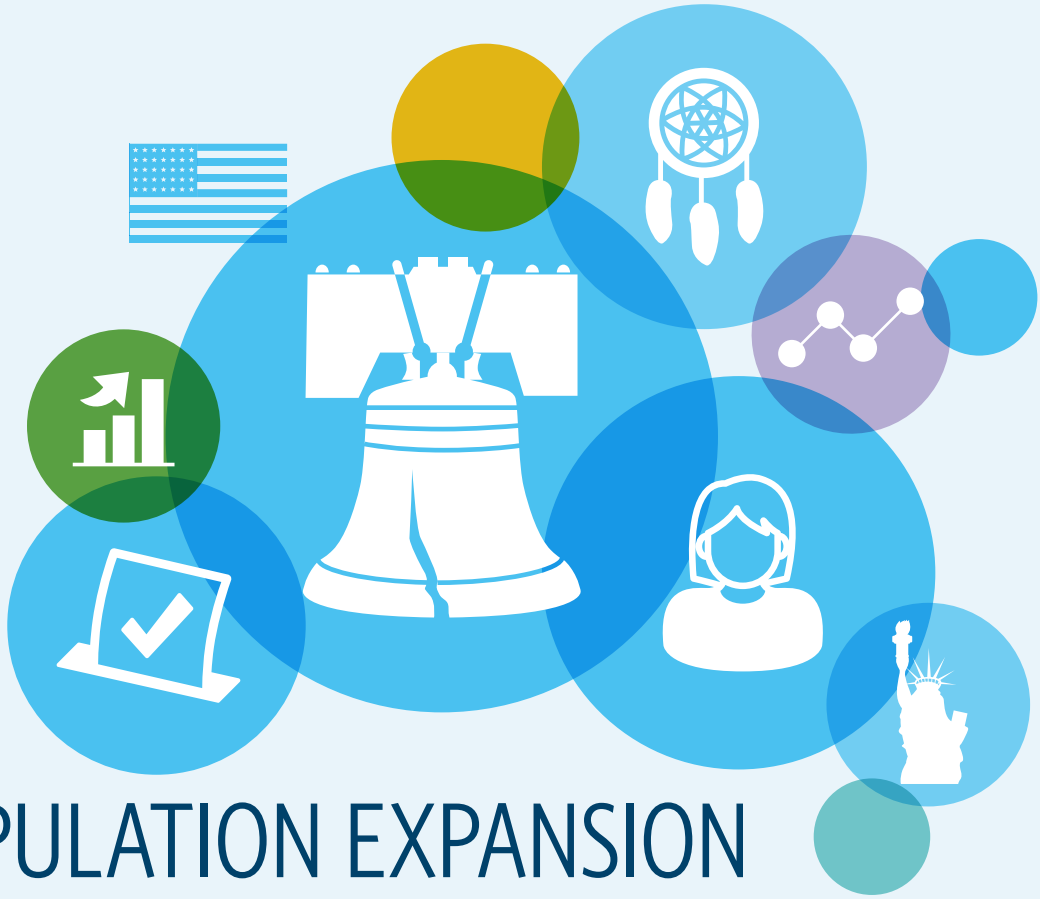


POPULATION EXPANSION AND DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES: 1790–2010

TEACHER VERSION

Subject Level:
High School History

Grade Level:
11–12

Approx. Time Required:
45–60 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to gather information from a data visualization tool to explain changes in the U.S. population distribution over time and by geographic region.
- Students will be able to analyze the causes and effects of these changes in population distribution.

United States™ Census Bureau

Classrooms Powered by Census Data

STATISTICS IN SCHOOLS

Activity Description

Students will use a data visualization tool to understand shifts in the U.S. population distribution from 1790 to 2010. They will also investigate the causes and effects of these shifts in distribution.

Suggested Grade Level:
11-12

Approximate Time Required:
45-60 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to gather information from a data visualization tool to explain changes in the U.S. population distribution over time and by geographic region.
- Students will be able to analyze the causes and effects of these changes in population distribution.

Topic:

- Population change

Skills Taught:

- Identifying cause and effect
- Making inferences
- Reading and interpreting bar graphs
- Synthesizing data

Materials Required

The student version of this activity, 3 pages

- A computer with Internet access for each student or small groups of students
- Teacher computer with Internet access and a projector to display web sites

Activity Item

This activity uses the following online tool:

- Gaining and Losing Shares – Population Distribution by Region: 1790–2010
  www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/006

For more information to help you introduce your students to the U.S. Census Bureau, read "*Census Bureau 101 for Students*." This information sheet can be printed and passed out to your students as well.

Standards Addressed

See charts below. For more information, read "*Overview of Education Standards and Guidelines Addressed in Statistics in Schools Activities*."

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Standard	Strand	Cluster
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.	RH 11–12 – History/ Social Studies	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

UCLA National Standards for History: U.S. History Content Standards

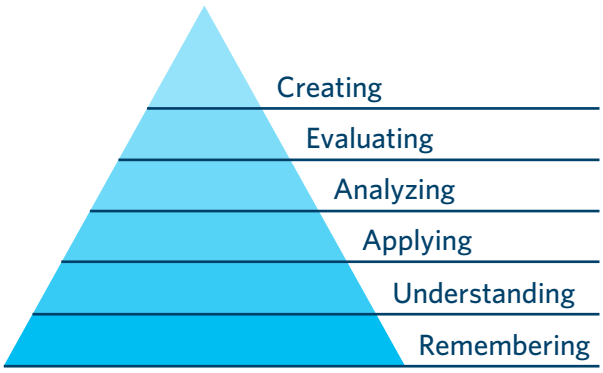
Because this activity spans multiple eras, it does not directly correspond to the content standards.

UCLA National Standards for History: Historical Thinking Standards

Standard	Description
Standard 1: Chronological Thinking	**Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration.** Students will understand the effect of historical events on the shifting population distribution in the United States between 1790 and 2010.
Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation	**Analyze cause-and-effect relationships.** Students will consider the social, economic, and political forces that had an impact on U.S. population distribution between 1790 and 2010.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Students will ***understand*** a data visualization and make comparisons with the data.



Teacher Notes

Before the Activity

Students should have a basic understanding of the following events, ideas, and concepts:

- The Civil War and why it began, specifically in reference to population shifts that led to a change in regional congressional power
- How seats in U.S. Congress are allocated

Teachers should lead a class brainstorm of major historical events that affected the population distribution in the United States between 1790 and 2010 (e.g., the Great Migration, Gold Rush, annexation of territories in the Southwest, Civil War, World War II), writing students' ideas on the board or typing and projecting them on a screen.

Teachers should then have pairs or small groups of students work together to each create a 1790–2010 timeline of U.S. history including any of these events, which will help them complete the activity.

Next, teachers should write the following question on the board (or display it using a projector) and ask pairs or groups of students to discuss their answers among themselves, then share their answers with the class:

"Of the West, Midwest, South, and Northeast regions of the United States, which do you think was the most populous in 1790? In 1890? In 1990? In 2010? Which region do you think is the most populous today? Support your hypotheses with specific details, explaining how and why the U.S. population distribution may have changed over time."

Teachers should project the data visualization tool (*www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/006*) on the screen, using the think-aloud strategy to demonstrate how to make observations and ask questions about the data, e.g., "I noticed that the Northeast lost more than half of its share of the population between 1790 and 2010"; or "What contributed to the population growth in the Midwest during the second half of the 19th century?" Teachers should ask questions to spark a class discussion on historical events that students know about already.

During the Activity

Teachers should emphasize to students that they should support their answers whenever possible with historical evidence from their timelines and/or prior knowledge of history.

After the Activity

To give students an opportunity to share what they learned, teachers could lead a whole-group discussion and/or have students fill out an exit slip with open-ended questions designed to elicit constructive, focused responses. Questions could be: "What did you learn that confirmed what you already knew about shifts in the population distribution in the United States?" or "What did you learn about the U.S. population distribution that surprised you?"

Extension Idea

Teachers could use other Statistics in Schools activities about similar topics to build on this activity.

Student Activity

Click ***here*** to download a printable version for students.

Activity Item

This activity uses the following online tool:

- Gaining and Losing Shares – Population Distribution by Region: 1790–2010
  www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/006

Student Learning Objectives

- I will be able to gather information from a data visualization tool to explain changes in the U.S. population distribution over time and by geographic region.
- I will be able to analyze the causes and effects of these changes in population distribution.

1. Navigate to the data visualization tool by typing the URL from the start of this activity into your browser. Then use your cursor to click and drag the marker along the timeline to see the shifts in population distribution among the four U.S. regions over time. Record three observations and/or questions about the data.

   Student answers will vary but should be relevant to the data visualization tool.

2. How was the U.S. population distributed among the four regions in 1790, and how did that population distribution compare with the 1840 distribution?

   In 1790, the population was evenly distributed between the South and the Northeast. In 1840, 40 percent of the population was in the South, about 39 percent was in the Northeast, and about 19 percent was in the Midwest. It doesn't appear that the population was distributed to the West.

3. What social, economic, or political factors could explain these changes in population distribution between 1790 and 1840?

   Student answers will vary but could include increasing urbanization, industrialization, improved transportation, and westward migration during that time.

4. Using your background knowledge about the Civil War:

   a. Explain how the shift in population distribution between 1790 and 1840 relates to a change in regional congressional power.

      As the population shifted across the United States, states in the Midwest gained seats in Congress, threatening the balance of power between the South and the Northeast.

   b. How did the shift in population distribution from 1790 to 1840 contribute to the start of the Civil War?

      Student answers will vary but could include: People in both the South and Northeast were concerned about the impact of congressional representation on decisions made about the institution of slavery.

5. Returning to the data visualization tool, how did the population distribution among the four regions change from 1900 to 1950? How about from 1950 to 2000?

   From 1900 to 1950, the population distribution went up in the West, went down in the Midwest, and remained about the same in the South and Northeast. From 1950 to 2000, the Midwest and Northeast saw a decrease in population distribution, while the West and South saw an increase in distribution.

6. How did the population distributions in the four regions change from 2000 to 2010? What events may have contributed to this population shift?

   Student answers will vary but could include: The population distributions in the West and South increased slightly, while the distributions in the other two regions decreased. This could be because more baby boomers retired, heading to warmer climates in the South and to places with more affordable costs of living in the West.

7. What impact do population shifts like these have on local and state governments and their infrastructure? Think broadly and deeply.

   Student answers will vary but could include that there may be less of a need for schools, hospitals, or transportation hubs in regions that lose their shares of the population. In regions with increasing population shares, the demographics of the incoming population could affect the state or local infrastructure in different ways. For example, an increase in school-aged children may mean more schools need to be built, but an increase in retirees would not affect schools.

8. What do you predict the data visualization for the four U.S. regions will look like in future years?

   Student predictions will vary.